

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 8319

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, US, IS, XF

SUBJECT: AIRLIFT - ALL SYSTEMS GO

THE AIRLIFT IS IN FULL SWING AND OPERATING SMOOTHLY. I PAID VISIT TO LOD ON OCT 16 TO INSPECT OPERATION AND WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY ALL PHASES BOTH FROM US AND ISRAELI SIDES. SHOULD NOTE THAT MOSHE DAYAN AND MRS. MEIR PAID SUBSEQUENT VISITS TO CONVEY PERSONAL APPRECIATION TO OUR CREWS. (COMMENT. SHE HAD SHOWN TREMENDOUS FASCINATION WITH MY DESCRIPTION OF AIRLIFT IN OUR MEETING.)

2. I NOTE FROM TODAY'S WIRELESS FILE AND TELS REPORTING PRESS BRIEFINGS AT PENTAGON AND DEPT THAT INEVITABLE QUESTIONS ARE BEGINNING TO SURFACE CONCERNING THE PRESENCE AND NATURE OF U.S. PERSONNEL ON THE GROUND IN ISRAEL SUPPORTING THE AIRLIFT. INDEED, ONE REPORTER AT PENTAGON RAISED QUESTION IN TERMS OF PRESENCE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT DELIVERY TEAM AND I PRESUME HE WAS REFERRING TO CAMBODIAN MODEL.

3. WE ARE, OF COURSE, GETTING PRESSURE FROM OUR CORPS OF ABOUT 200 U.S. CORRESPONDENTS WHO WANT TO FILM OR GET DETAILS ABOUT AIRLIFT. WE ARE CAREFUL, OF COURSE, TO STAY COMPLETELY IN STEP WITH OFFICIAL GUIDANCE FROM WASHINGTON.

4. IT WORTH NOTING THAT CRAIG WHITNEY, NEW YORK TIMES, HAS TODAY TWICE QUERIED MY PRESS ATTACHE ON POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF "AMERICAN PERSONNEL" IN FIGHTING ON NORTHERN FRONT. WHITNEY
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BASING HIS QUERIES ON HIS ALLEGATION THAT HE OVERHEARD "AMERICAN VOICES" ON IDF RADIO IN THE GOLAN AREA. PRESS ATTACHE EMPHATICALLY DENIED ANY SUCH INVOLVEMENT IN FIGHTING. IN ANSWER TO FURTHER QUESTION, PRESS ATTACHE DENIED ANY U.S. RESUPPLY AIRCRAFT WERE

CARRYING MATERIAL DIRECTLY TO FRONT. AT LAST READING, WHITNEY STILL DIGGING AROUND TOWN IN THIS PARTICULAR HOLE, DESPITE OUR ATTEMPTS TO SET HIM STRAIGHT. AS TIME GOES ON, AND IN ABSENCE ANY OFFICIAL INFO FROM USG CONCERNING NATURE AND NUMBER OF PERSONNEL INVOLVED, WE CAN EXPECT MORE OF THESE FLIGHTS OF FANCY BY THE PRESS HERE.

5. AS DEPT IS AWARE, MY DATT IS COMMAND CHANNEL FROM THIS MISSION TO THE LOGISTICS/COMMUNICATIONS PERSONNEL ON THE GROUND AT LOD. HE HAS JUST PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INFO WHICH I BELIEVE WILL BE OF INTEREST:

6. THERE ARE CURRENTLY 41 USAF PERSONNEL AT LOD AIRPORT PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE AIRLIFT. THESE INCLUDE:

A. 6 AIRCRAFT MECHANICS TO ASSIST ISRAEL AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES IN PERFORMING ANY MAINTENANCE REQUIRED ON C-54 OR C-141 AIRCRAFT.

B. 16 COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALISTS WHO PROVIDE REQUIRED COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT FOR THE OPERATION.

C. 2 OFFICERS IN COMMAND ELEMENT.

D. 10 TECHNICIANS WHO OPERATE THE SPECIALIZED OFF LOADING EQUIPMENT.

E. A DOCUMENTARY TEAM OF 6 AND A PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER WHO ARE RECORDING THE AIRLIFT FOR USAF HISTORICAL PURPOSES. THESE PERSONNEL ARE SCHEDULED TO RETURN TO THE U.S. IN NEXT FEW DAYS WHICH WILL DROP FIGURE FROM 41 TO 34. THESE REMAINING 34 PRESUMABLY WILL RETURN WITH FINAL AIRLIFT AIRCRAFT.

7. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THERE ARE ALSO U.S. CONTRACTOR REPRESENTATIVES IN ISRAEL WHO MIGHT BE CONSIDERED TO BE USG TECHNICIANS, ALBEIT CIVILIAN. PRIOR TO THE AIRLIFT THERE WERE A TOTAL OF 5 SUCH REPS RESIDENT IN ISRAEL -- 2 FROM MACDONNELL-DOUGLAS AND 3 FROM G.E. WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS WE UNDERSTAND THERE WILL BE AN ADDITIONAL 10 OR 11 CONTRACTOR REPS ARRIVING. DURATION OF THEIR STAY UNKNOWN BUT SHOULD BE RELATIVELY SHORT, SINCE ISRAELI TECHNICIANS ARE EXPECTED TO ABSORB NEW INFO QUICKLY.

8. UNLESS THERE IS INFO WE DO NOT HAVE, THEREFORE, OUR SUPPORT
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TEAM SHOULD STABILIZE AT 34 USAF PERSONNEL, PLUS 5 CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS PREVIOUSLY IN COUNTRY.

9. THE ORDERS ARE THE SAME, OF COURSE, FOR ALL MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PARTICIPATING IN THE RESUPPLY EFFORT: HEADS DOWN AND MOUTHS SHUT.
KEATING

SECRET

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